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To: County and District Superintendents
California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) Coordinators

Re: Cancellation of July 2003 CAHSEE Administration

At its July meeting, the members of the State Board of Education (SBE) will take action on whether or not to delay the graduation requirements for the CAHSEE. I am aware that this July decision has caused confusion for school administrators, students, and parents regarding summer school scheduling and upcoming test administrations. At the July Board meeting, I will be recommending to Board members that they:

- Delay the graduation requirement to pass the CAHSEE until 2006
- Recognize those students who have passed both parts of the CAHSEE.
- Reduce both the length of the test and the number of days it is administered.

I am very encouraged by the March 2003 results from the Class of 2005. I congratulate you on your hard work and encourage you to continue the momentum toward raising standards and improving achievement. (See attached chart.)

I believe the board will vote to postpone the graduation requirement in July. In the meantime, we are set to administer the test at the end of July. In light of the confusion regarding the pending SBE decision, and to provide you flexibility in planning summer school programs, **I am canceling the July 2003 CAHSEE administration.** If, as anticipated, the SBE votes to delay the requirement, I also will cancel the September and November administrations. I strongly recommend that you encourage students who have not yet passed the CAHSEE to attend summer school. Students who have not mastered the knowledge and skills assessed on the CAHSEE could benefit from additional instruction this summer. By canceling the July administration, your parents and students can make an informed decision about what classes are best for them.

I am recommending that the SBE delay the graduation requirement for the classes of 2004 and 2005 because: (1) the Assembly Bill 1609 Study Report indicates "...many factors suggest that the effectiveness of standards-based instruction will improve for each succeeding class" [after the class of 2004]; and (2) I want to maintain the positive momentum created by the CAHSEE by requiring students in the class of 2006 to take it as 10th graders beginning in January 2004.

I am eliminating the July administration not only for this year but also for future years as the first step in developing a new CAHSEE testing schedule. We are in the process of finalizing this new schedule, which I am confident you will find more accommodating to your calendars. I have heard from many administrators that it is difficult to schedule the July test because it may not coincide with their scheduled summer school. Last year, schools ordered 166,000 tests for the July administration and only 46,000 students were tested.

Canceling the July 2003 test will:

- Reduce the testing burden for students and schools.
- Provide schools flexibility in scheduling summer school by giving them more time to examine student results and plan appropriate actions for students.
- Save schools money in this tight budget time.
- Provide more opportunity for instruction and remediation in English-language arts and mathematics.

The Assembly Bill 1609 Study Report also found that those schools that have closely aligned their curriculum to the content standards, reported passing rates of 75 percent or greater more frequently than schools without early implementation of the standards.

- As a second step to minimize the testing burden on students and schools, I am directing the CDE to put together a special committee to re-examine the CAHSEE and to recommend changes in order to reduce the length of the test.

I appreciate your continued support of this program. Please contact the High School Exit Examination Office at (916) 445-9449 if you have any questions. Thank you.

Sincerely,

JACK O'CONNELL

CAHSEE Passing Rates for First-Time Test Takers in the Class of 2004 and 2005

Cohort	English-Language Arts		
	Number Tested	Number Passed	Percent Passed
Class of 2004 (Spring 2001 – Grade 9 first-time test takers)	369,968	236,646	64%
Class of 2005 (March 2003 – Grade 10 first-time test takers)	379,209	299,584	79%

Cohort	Mathematics		
	Number Tested	Number Passed	Percent Passed
Class of 2004 (Spring 2001 – Grade 9 first-time test takers)	365,325	161,967	44%
Class of 2005 (March 2003 – Grade 10 first-time test takers)	389,702	234,230	60%